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ABSTRACT

Project Opportunity is a talent search and encouragement program that attempts to identify disadvantaged students with academic potential. The purposes of the program are: (1) to increase their academic achievement; (2) decrease the dropout rate; (3) increase the number continuing in higher education; (4) augment their knowledge of vocational opportunity; (5) improve their self-image; (6) broaden their cultural and recreational experiences; and (7) encourage them to remain in the South. The Project identifies participants at the 7th grade and continues working with them for at least 6 years; it places primary emphasis on guidance services. This booklet presents: (1) the history of the Project; (2) its organization and financing; (3) a description of the students; (4) a discussion of the guidance services; (5) the contributions of sponsoring colleges; (6) discussions of both the summer and (7) school-year programs; and (8) some future plans. The organizational structure of the Project, Project personnel, and members of Local Policy Committees are included in the appendix. (AF)

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PROJECT OPPORTUNITY

A Progress Report 1964-1968

A Fifteen mile hike

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Project Opportunity is one of several programs administered by the Education Improvement Project of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Additional information about this and other programs of EIP and copies of this publication may be obtained by contacting the Association's office, 795 Peachtree Street N. E., Atlanta, Georgia 30308.

Contents

	page
Premises and Objectives	3
Introduction	5
History	7
Organization and Financing	12
About the Students	15
Guidance Services	24
Contributions of Sponsoring Colleges	27
Summer Programs	30
School Year Program	34
The Road Ahead	37
Appendix	40

Premises and Objectives

Project Opportunity is based on the following three premises:

1. That when improved provisions are made for meeting the educational needs of disadvantaged students with superior academic potential, these students will show significantly better academic achievement, their motivation will be increased, and their levels of aspiration raised.

2. That in the process of identifying and utilizing educational practices that are appropriate for helping these students improve their academic performance, college personnel, principals, guidance counselors, teachers and parents will improve their understanding of these children and their attitudes toward them. Such changes are important not only for the students being directly served, but also for the promise these innovations offer for helping future students who may be disadvantaged.

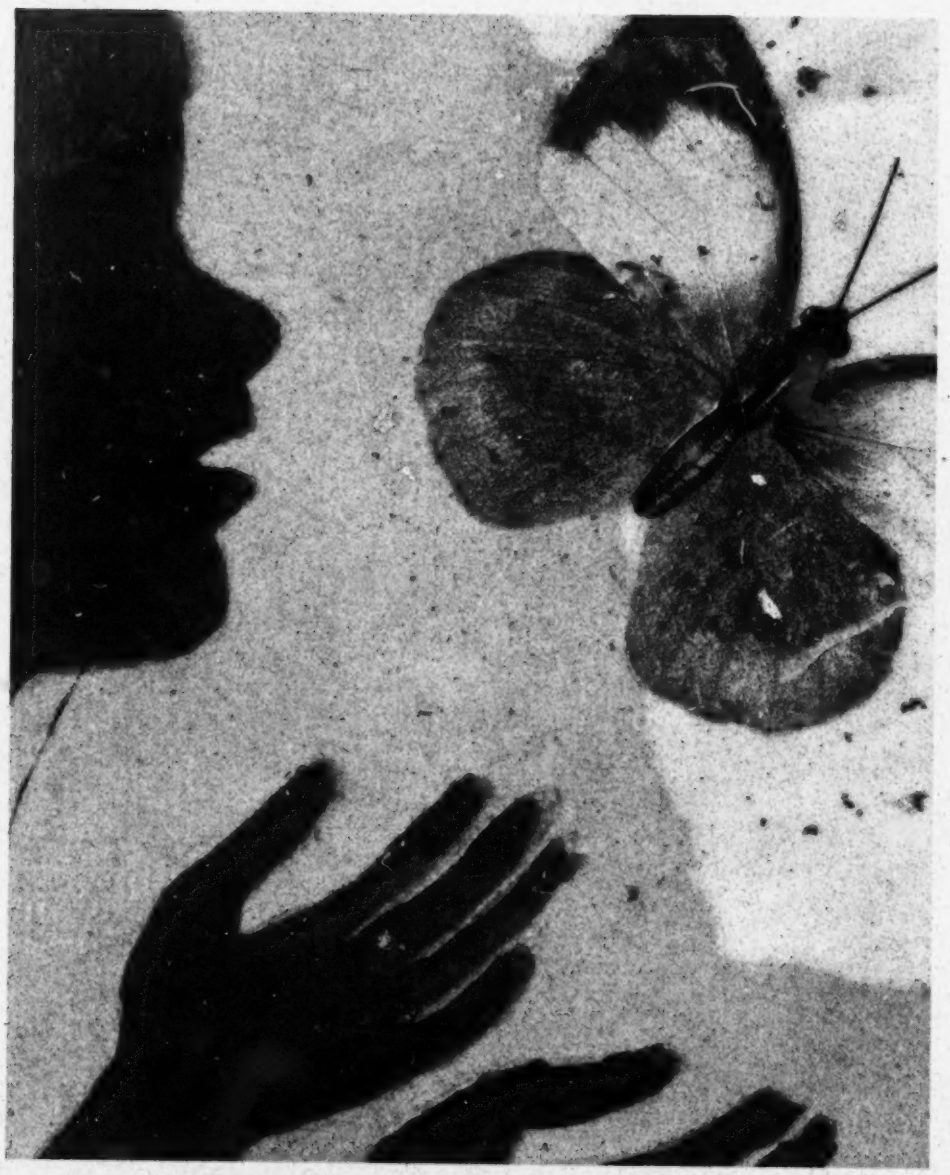
3. That an effective program of operation can be financially feasible for use in schools where the majority of the school population comes from low income families.

With these premises in mind, Project Opportunity seeks to achieve the following specific objectives in regard to disadvantaged students with academic potential:

- ☐ Increase their academic achievement.
- ☐ Decrease the dropout rate.
- ☐ Increase the number continuing in higher education.
- ☐ Augment their knowledge of vocational opportunity.
- ☐ Improve their self-image.
- ☐ Broaden their cultural and recreational experiences.
- ☐ Encourage them to remain in the South.

At the same time, the Project hopes to:

- ☐ Test new teaching techniques.
- ☐ Improve the basis for college selection.
- ☐ Increase the awareness of the counselors, students, and parents of the many sources of financial aid for college.
- ☐ Increase the parents' and school staffs' understanding of these students.
- ☐ Utilize the facilities and personnel of nearby colleges or universities in developing the full potential of the students.



Introduction

In the past decade educational projects concerned with disadvantaged children have received increasing attention. In many programs that appear to influence positive changes in the disadvantaged, there is a question as to whether the measured success has stemmed from the "Hawthorne effect" (positive change as a result of *any* action that shows interest or concern) or whether it was the result of methods and techniques. It would seem logical that the "Hawthorne effect" might emerge more easily in a short-term project where "the project" is relatively new than it would over an extended period when "the project," through sheer familiarity, becomes an integral part of the program. Project Opportunity is a longitudinal program of slow, steady growth that is planned to give ideas time to root and develop. *It is more of a fifteen mile hike than a hundred yard dash.*

Many previous programs for the disadvantaged have dealt exclusively with populations in urban centers. Although urban problems are no stranger to the South, much of the population in this region still resides in rural areas or in towns of fewer than 10,000.

The eleven Project Opportunity centers are spread throughout eight southern states, and operate in both predominantly white and Negro schools. Seven of the centers are located in metropolitan areas; one is located in a town of approximately 9,000; and three are in small towns with fewer than 2,000 inhabitants. Three of the Project Opportunity demonstration centers are in the Appalachian Mountains, an area that is largely white in population and one that presents problems notably different from those in urban Negro areas.

Demonstration projects often are criticized for involving the addition of too many specialists, calling for too great an increase in the teaching staff, and requiring too much in operating funds to be practical for the average school budget. Project Opportunity attempts to develop an effective, yet financially feasible, program that will serve as a basic pattern for schools where the majority of students come from disadvantaged areas. By enlisting the cooperation of local school personnel, sponsoring college personnel, community agencies, and parents, educational and cultural experiences are provided that would otherwise be unavailable to these students.

Project Opportunity demonstrates the crucial importance of guidance services in the total school program. The only full-time professional employee added to the school staff at each center has been the Project Opportunity counselor—a person who works exclusively in the interests of the identified students over a five or six-year period.

Project Opportunity differs from other talent search and encouragement programs in that it:

- ☐ operates on a relatively small budget at each center,
- ☐ identifies the participants at the seventh grade level and continues working with them for at least six years,
- ☐ places primary emphasis on guidance services,
- ☐ is administered at the local level by a policy committee that includes both school and college representatives.

History

7

Project Opportunity is a plan conceived by a group of admissions officers of Southern colleges and universities working with the Southern Regional Office of the College Entrance Examination Board, and with the support and cooperation of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The project unites a group of colleges and schools in an effort to prepare economically disadvantaged, yet academically talented, young people for admission to higher education. The program is directed toward the disadvantaged student with the belief that his success will affect community attitudes toward equal educational opportunity. Its success depends heavily on the voluntary efforts of college faculty and students, school faculty, and individuals of the community.

In 1963 the proposal for Project Opportunity came under the aegis of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' Education Improvement Project, a program established to initiate and administer action programs for the improvement of education in the South.

When support for the proposal was obtained in April 1964, in the form of a $150,000 organizational grant from the Ford Foundation, the director of the Education Improvement Project (EIP) assumed leadership for Project Opportunity. Also of significant aid in getting the Project underway was an earlier Danforth Foundation grant of $450,000 to the Education Improvement Project to cover the administrative costs of its component programs.

In August 1964, an associate director was appointed to work specifically with Project Opportunity and in November 1964, a six-member committee was appointed to serve as an advisory and policymaking group for the Project. In July 1966, another associate director, with primary responsibility for evaluation, was added to the central staff.

By September 1964, sixteen colleges and universities had assumed the responsibility for eleven school projects in eight Southern states. Of major importance here was the commitment of college faculty and staff time and other institutional resources to the Project. In effect, each college agreed to assist in raising to college-preparatory levels the quality of education given to the Project students in its sponsored school.

In addition, each sponsoring college agreed to provide a minimum of four financial aid awards each year to Project students when they eventually enroll there.[1]

In selecting the Project schools that were to participate, planners specified that the schools must have a significant dropout problem, a low proportion of graduates who continue their education beyond high school, and an administration and faculty interested in undertaking the additional duties and responsibilities that Project Opportunity would generate. Because of the crucial role of the sponsoring colleges, it was decided that each should select and negotiate with the school or school system which it would sponsor. The planners also drew up some specific guidelines for the program which stated that:

1. It should concentrate solely on

[1]The first Project students will be eligible to enroll in college beginning in 1970.

schools where the majority of the school population comes from low-income families, the theory being that demonstrably significant results with these students could serve as guideposts for similar schools throughout the country.

2. The project should pinpoint the potentially talented students in the seventh and eighth grades in order to plan and carry out a thorough secondary school program aimed at college preparation.

3. The program would work with six successive groups. (In dealing with major educational problems, programs must have time to put down roots if permanent change is to occur.)

4. Once identified, students would be given remedial education, intense and continuous guidance, and every opportunity and encouragement to complete secondary school and proceed to college.

5. Help in gaining admission to college and help in securing necessary financial aid would be assured each student in the Project—not merely held out in some abstract way to the group as a whole.

These guidelines indicated that the project must not only capitalize on every secondary school resource in each community where it was to operate, but also would have to rely heavily on the resources—and the sponsorship—of a nearby college or university. The sponsoring colleges and the major Project school(s) in each center are shown on page 10.

State	Sponsoring College	Major Project Schools[2]
Alabama	Tuskegee Institute	Drake High School (Auburn)
	Spring Hill College	Most Pure Heart of Mary High School (Mobile)[3]
Georgia	Morehouse College and Spelman College	Archer High School (Atlanta)
Kentucky	Berea College, Centre College, and Transylvania College	Breathitt County High School (Jackson) and Lee County High School (Beattyville)
Louisiana	Tulane University	Priestley Junior High School (New Orleans)[4]
Mississippi	Tougaloo College	Rogers High School (Canton)
North Carolina	Duke University and North Carolina State University at Raleigh	Highlands Junior High School Merrick-Moore High School (Durham)
	Davidson College	Second Ward High School and Irwin Junior High School (Charlotte)
Tennessee	Fisk University and Vanderbilt University	Cameron High School (Nashville) and Rose Park Junior High School (Nashville)
Virginia	Mary Baldwin College The University of Virginia	Nelson County High School

[2]The "feeder" elementary schools are not listed. In many centers students attend these elementary schools during the seventh and eighth grades.

[3]Most Pure Heart of Mary High School (an all Negro Catholic school) closed in June, 1968. Students will now go to one of two fully integrated high schools, Bishop Toolen (girls) and McGill Academy (boys). The two schools do not enroll a majority of their students from low socio-economic backgrounds.

[4]Project Opportunity students attend Fortier High School, a large fully integrated college preparatory high school; it does not have a majority of students from a low socio-economic class.

As the matching of school to higher institution proceeded, it soon became apparent that Project Opportunity would not consist of one prototype program for all eleven communities, but of eleven individual local programs. To be sure, common goals and a general format were to be shared, but each had to develop its own variety of approaches and its own model for action to attain these goals. This meant that eleven separate program centers had to be set up. The only additional paid person added to each center was a counselor, who was employed on a full-time basis to work exclusively with Project Opportunity students.

When school opened in the fall of 1965, Project Opportunity was in operation. Some 3,000 seventh grade students had been screened, and about 600 had been identified as potentially talented and chosen for the project.[5] Four successive groups of seventh grade students, out of the six specified by the Project's planners, have been selected and started in the program. If the two future groups contain comparable numbers, some 3,000 to 3,500 students will have participated.

In January 1966, the Ford Foundation reaffirmed its belief in the program by appropriating more than $1.6 million for its support over the next five years.

[5] In all schools, the initial criteria for selection of students were the ones recommended initially by the Project staff; selection was based on the student's past academic record, the results of School and College Ability Test and Sequential Tests of Educational Progress measures, and recommendations of teachers.

11

Organization and Financing

The Coordinating Committee of the Education Improvement Project (EIP) is composed of outstanding educators in the South designated by the Board of Trustees of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to serve as a policy-making body for the various projects initiated by the EIP.

The director of the Southern Association, Dr. Felix C. Robb, is chairman of the Coordinating Committee. A central staff for EIP, with Dr. Donald C. Agnew as director, shares office facilities with the Southern Association in Atlanta, Georgia.

The Danforth Foundation, in the main, has funded the central EIP staff and its facilities, enabling the staff to assume responsibility for originating and developing programs designed to advance and upgrade education in Southern states[1] and to seek funding for the programs.

Project Opportunity is but one component of the total EIP and it was placed under the administration of EIP for facility of operation. The College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB) has continued its interest and cooperation with representatives of that organization serving on both the Coordinating Committee of EIP and the Project Opportunity Advisory Committee.

The Project Opportunity Advisory Committee was organized in the fall of 1964 and is composed of representatives from colleges and universities, the CEEB, and secondary schools. This group meets periodically to review progress, recommend policy change if it is deemed necessary, and to serve the central staff in an advisory capacity.

Two associate directors for Project Opportunity are staff members of the central EIP. They serve Project Opportunity as consultants for the demonstration centers, conduct a continuing program of visitation to evaluate the work in progress, assist in program development, and conduct pertinent research. They also are responsible, along with the director of EIP, for developing policies, administering programs, allocating funds to the eleven centers, reviewing financial reports, and providing a yearly audit of each center.

Program implementation is the responsibility of the local Policy Committee of each Project center. This committee is made up of representatives from the school administration, the sponsoring college or colleges, and the Project counselor.

A suggested budget for a fifteen-year period was submitted with the proposal for Project Opportunity to the Ford Foundation. In April, 1964, the Ford Foundation approved an organizational grant of $150,000 to finance the initial year of the Project and in January, 1966, earmarked a five-year appropriation of $1,659,000 for continued support of its activities. This five-year appropriation provides the financial support for the eleven centers and gives major financial backing to the Project's administrative office in Atlanta. A budget is submitted annually to the Ford Foundation and funds are received and administered on a quarterly basis by the central office in Atlanta.

The only regularly employed person in each center paid by Project Opportunity is the Project counselor;

[1]Southern states referred to are those served by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.

other personnel who contribute to the operation of Project programs do so on a voluntary basis. During the first year of the Project each center received $6,000 for operating Project programs and in September, 1965, funds were increased to $8,000. In September, 1968, funds will be increased to $11,000 and to $12,000 in 1969 when six groups of students will be participating in the Project. Operating funds will decrease proportionally after 1970 as Project students are graduated from high school and enter college.

The operating funds are used to purchase books and educational materials necessary to introduce methods of teaching and techniques of learning, to finance in part summer enrichment programs, to pay for those field trips and cultural activities that require financial support, to provide financial means by which the counselor can belong to organizations and attend meetings for professional improvement, and to pay general expenses involved in maintaining the counselor's office. Each sponsoring college and university is granted $3,500 annually for developing in-service training programs for teachers working with the Project students. A large portion of these funds is used to operate programs in the summer when training and laboratory experiences can be combined in innovative techniques being tested with Project students. Programs for working with the teachers during the school year (after school, on Saturdays, and during the school day when substitute teachers can be made available by these funds) are developing.

About the Students

Project Opportunity is concerned with the most academically talented students enrolled in the schools of the eleven participating centers. Recognizing that the words "most academically talented" can be defined in various ways, recommendations concerning the identification of seventh grade students were adopted in the summer of 1964. The recommendations called for a two-phase procedure that selected broadly at the seventh grade with strict selection coming at the ninth grade. Each local center was encouraged to establish a selection committee to carry out procedures of identification and continuous student evaluation. Specific recommendations included:

1. Selecting the top 15 percent of the seventh grade pupils on the basis of their prior academic record.
2. Administering a test of academic aptitude and then listing the top 25 percent.
3. Administering tests of academic achievement and then listing the top 25 percent.
4. Obtaining from the selection committee nominations of pupils, not otherwise selected or listed, who for one reason or another seem promising.
5. Limiting the number by cutting from the lists envisioned in steps 2 and 3.

In carrying out the recommendations concerning selection, the centers faced a number of problems. One such problem concerned the absolute number that could be handled by the program. In all except the Breathitt County center, only one Project Opportunity counselor was employed. Since the Project plan called for adding a new group of students for six successive years beginning in 1964-65 and for the counselor to continue working with these same students through high school graduation, there has been a gradual increase in the number of students involved. Counselors have been able to adjust to the annual increase without any apparent loss in their effectiveness. Table 1 shows the number of students that were tentatively selected at the various centers during the first four years of Project Opportunity.

Table 1

NUMBER OF STUDENTS SELECTED FOR PROJECT OPPORTUNITY BY CENTER AND YEAR

Center	Year	Seventh Grade Enrollment in PO Schools	Tentatively Selected for Project Opportunity	Percent Selected
Charlotte	1964-65	260	89	34
	1965-66	255	65	25
	1966-67	217	28	13
	1967-68	208	24	12
Breathitt County	1964-65	292	90	31
	1965-66	375	93	25
	1966-67	359	62	17
	1967-68	273	—	—

Center	Year	Seventh Grade Enrollment in PO Schools	Tentatively Selected for Project Opportunity	Percent Selected
Auburn	1964-65	166	39	23
	1965-66	153	90	59
	1966-67	113	34	30
	1967-68	88	28	32
New Orleans	1964-65	241	81	23
	1965-66	369	83	22
	1966-67	231	51	22
	1967-68	233	76	33
Nelson County	1964-65	261	61	23
	1965-66	231	55	24
	1966-67	229	50	22
	1967-68	241	—*	—
Canton	1964-65	235	42	18
	1965-66	176	34	19
	1966-67	254	32	12
	1967-68	326	31	10
Atlanta	1964-65	229	61	27
	1965-66	183	49	27
	1966-67	320	35	11
	1967-68	—*	—	—
Lee County	1964-65	133	65	49
	1965-66	196	64	33
	1966-67	178	36	20
	1967-68	164	—*	—
Mobile	1964-65	86	38	44
	1965-66	104	52	50
	1966-67	91	40	44
	1967-68	89	31	35
Nashville	1964-65	375	84	22
	1965-66	354	91	26
	1966-67	363	62	17
	1967-68	299	49	16
Durham	1964-65	189	64	34
	1965-66	169	62	37
	1966-67	193	47	24
	1967-68	182	—*	—

*Not selected as of May 1, 1968

Table 1 suggests that the centers have employed widely different identification principles. Some centers emphasize that the seventh grade identifications are tentative and that final selection will be made in the ninth grade. Other centers do not make any selections from the seventh grade group at all; seventh graders are informed about the Project and told that selection will be made during the eighth grade. This principle is followed in the Nelson County, Virginia, center. Other centers seem to select the number of students that will permit formation of one college preparatory section of from 24 to 34 students. This is the principle now operating at Charlotte, Auburn, and Canton.

In identifying Project students there was no recommended principle relating to the proportion of boys and girls who would be included; it was assumed that the numbers of boys and girls would be about equal. However, as the first groups have been identified it has become obvious that many more girls than boys are being selected. From Table 2 we note that in no center does the proportion of all boys to girls currently enrolled in the Project reach 50 percent. In four centers—Atlanta, Mobile, Canton, and Charlotte—there are about two girls for every one boy. The highest proportions of boys are found in those two centers which have an all-white enrollment—Lee County and Breathitt County in Kentucky. We also find that there is no trend toward selecting more boys with each successive year's group; in fact, in six centers there was a smaller proportion of boys selected for the group most recently chosen than was done for Group I. In two centers, Mobile and New Orleans, the proportion of boys in Group I (those selected in 1964-65) is now less than one out of five; in both centers the proportion of boys originally selected was quite low—30 percent in New Orleans and 26 percent in Mobile. The proportion of boys currently enrolled in these two groups is 16 and 18 respectively, indicating a higher dropout rate from the Project for these boys than for girls in these centers.

Table 2

PROPORTION OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF PROJECT STUDENTS IN EACH CENTER WHO ARE BOYS

Center	Group	Percent of Those Originally Identified	Percent of Those Still in Project Opportunity
Lee County	I	37	36
	II	44	46
	III	56	57
	IV	—	—
	Total	44	45
Nelson County	I	41	44
	II	53	52
	III	32	32
	IV	—	—
	Total	42	42

18

Center	Group	Percent of Those Originally Identified	Percent of Those Still in Project Opportunity
Charlotte	I	45	38
	II	34	37
	III	32	33
	IV	25	25
	Total	37	34
Auburn	I	38	44
	II	46	35
	III	38	38
	IV	36	36
	Total	41	38
New Orleans	I	30	16
	II	40	41
	III	43	43
	IV	43	43
	Total	38	38
Breathitt County	I	48	48
	II	43	44
	III	44	44
	IV	—	—
	Total	45	46
Mobile	I	26	18
	II	44	39
	III	42	44
	IV	35	35
	Total	38	36
Atlanta	I	30	27
	II	45	44
	III	34	35
	IV	—	—
	Total	36	35
Canton	I	38	36
	II	32	37
	III	31	33
	IV	32	33
	Total	34	35
Nashville	I	48	51
	II	37	39
	III	47	46
	IV	37	37
	Total	42	43
Durham	I	42	38
	II	37	37
	III	42	43
	IV	50	50
	Total	42	42

Retention

One of the goals of the Project is to reduce the dropout rate in the participating schools, especially among the academically talented. Table 3 relates to this goal; it shows the status of students who were identified as Project Opportunity students during the first two years of the Project's operation, 1964-65 and 1965-66.

Table 3

STATUS OF THE FIRST TWO GROUPS OF PROJECT OPPORTUNITY STUDENTS (as of May 1, 1968)

Center	Group	Number Tentatively Identified	Still in P.O.		In P.O. School-Dropped From P.O.		Transferred		Complete School Drop-Outs	
			No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Auburn	I	39	27	69	7	18	3	8	2	5
	II	90	26	29	47	52	12	13	5	6
Canton	I	42	36	86	1	2	4	10	1	2
	II	34	30	88	0	0	4	12	0	0
Nelson	I	61	58	95	0	0	1	2	2	3
	II	55	52	94	1	2	1	2	1	2
New Orleans	I	81	43	53	28	34	9	11	1	1
	II	83	46	55	12	14	22	26	3	4
Breathitt	I	90	68	76	14	16	5	6	3	3
	II	93	84	90	0	0	9	10	0	0
Charlotte	I	89	26	29	10	11	40	45	13	15
	II	65	49	75	1	2	13	20	2	3
Lee	I	65	52	80	0	0	5	8	8	12
	II	64	57	89	2	3	2	3	3	5
Mobile	I	38	17	45	10	26	11	29	0	0
	II	52	18	35	24	46	10	19	0	0
Atlanta	I	61	52	85	5	8	0	0	4	6
	II	49	43	88	3	6	3	6	0	0
Nashville	I	84	63	75	0	0	19	23	2	2
	II	91	75	82	0	0	13	14	3	3
Durham	I	65	47	72	7	11	11	17	0	0
	II	60	57	95	0	0	3	5	0	0

Table 3 reveals that there are striking differences in the retention rate among the various centers. At Nelson County around 95 percent of those students ever identified are still in the Project. In sharp contrast is the situation in Mobile where over half the originally designated Project students of the first two groups have dropped out of the Project. In Mobile the Project students in Group II have been channeled into the college preparatory programs at two Catholic high schools—McGill Academy (for boys) and Toolen High School (for girls). It was decided by the local policy committee to drop any student from the Project Opportunity program who could not meet the entrance requirements for the college prep program at these schools. The basic requirement was an average score which placed the student at the 50th percentile (on National norms) on the National Educational Development Tests. Unfortunately, about half the originally identified students from group II failed to meet this standard and were thus dropped.

At Charlotte, where only 26 of the original 89 identified students are still in the Project some 40 of the original number have transferred to non-Project schools; a number of those students were dropped from the Project before their transfer because of poor academic performance. It is interesting to note from Table 1 that entrance into the Project has become much more selective in Charlotte since the program first began—34 percent of the schools' seventh-grade students originally were selected for group I while only 12 percent were selected for group IV.

It is disturbing to note that already some students have dropped completely out of school. Although the percentage figures are low, these students are ones that the Project was trying to reach. In Charlotte, where 15 percent of Group I are school dropouts, the principal reason given for this action in each case is as follows: two boys have married; six girls have married and/or become pregnant; two boys and one girl have dropped out because of poor scholastic performance; and two boys have been expelled for misconduct and are now in a correctional institution.

The proportion transferring to non-Project schools is highest in centers that are located in large urban areas. In small rural communities such as Nelson County there are only two high schools in the county. In New Orleans, Charlotte, and Nashville, where there are many schools within a relatively short radius, students have frequently transferred to other schools in the same system.

Family Characteristics

The Coleman Report has pointed out the importance of the family background of a student in determining the educational level reached. What are the family backgrounds of Project Opportunity students? Data on three factors will be briefly presented: family size, parents' occupations, and parents' educational level.

Most of the Project students come from relatively large families. At the Atlanta center, 45 percent of the students have from four to six brothers and sisters; at the Charlotte center, the average number of brothers and sisters is five. Family size is even larger in the two centers in Eastern Kentucky; in Breathitt County, for example, 48 percent of the Project students come from families where there are seven or more

21

brothers and sisters.

Very few of the children in the Project come from families with sufficient income for meeting college expenses. A few examples from one center will illustrate:

1. JA—father, a chef; mother, a cook; four children
2. JB—no father in home; mother, a maid; three children
3. EF—father deceased; mother, a housewife; two children
4. AD—father, a janitor and taxi driver; mother, a maid; seven children
5. PD—father, unknown; mother, a store clerk; two children
6. LD—parents deceased; lives with an aunt; four children
7. DE—father deceased; mother on welfare; ten children
8. CL—father disabled; mother, a practical nurse; five children
9. LH—father, a minister; mother, a teacher; one child
10. BS—no father in home; mother, a maid; eleven children

The educational level of parents of Project students is generally low. The percentage of fathers completing high school ranges from a low of only four percent in Breathitt County to a high of 24 percent in Atlanta. The same two centers provide the low and the high percentages with respect to mothers graduating from high school—six percent in Breathitt; 40 percent in Atlanta. Throughout all centers the percentage of parents completing college is around three percent; these parents generally are teachers.

Educational Attainment

What is the scholastic aptitude and achievement of Project students as compared with other students? Table 4 shows the percentage of Project students of Group I and Group II who as ninth graders placed in the top quarter on the various tests of the Sequential Tests of Educational Progress and the two parts (verbal and quantitative) of the School and College Ability Test.

Table 4

PERCENT OF PROJECT OPPORTUNITY STUDENTS IN GROUP I AND GROUP II PLACING IN THE TOP QUARTER OF THE NATIONAL DISTRIBUTIONS OF THE NINTH GRADE NORMS FOR THE STEP-SCAT

Center and Number of students		STEP						SCAT	
		Math	Sci	S.S.	Read	List	Write	V.	Q.
Auburn	(51)	10	6	4	6	4	14	4	4
Atlanta*	(54)	13	21	15	24	—	26	6	6
Canton	(61)	5	5	4	7	3	6	2	1
New Orleans	(126)	6	4	12	24	—	25	9	1
Mobile*	(24)	62	24	50	62	67	71	62	50
Nashville	(122)	14	11	17	30	23	25	17	8
Breathitt	(139)	39	29	36	44	29	25	22	43
Lee	(105)	50	35	50	56	48	63	35	24
Nelson	(110)	54	56	56	55	65	67	46	57
Durham	(103)	16	17	28	33	20	23	42	18
Charlotte	(74)	16	12	12	22	20	27	14	3

*Includes only Group I students

Table 4 reveals several important points about the educational attainments of these students.

1. A generally *higher* percentage place in the top quarter on the verbal section of SCAT than on the *quantitative.* Verbal ability among disadvantaged students has often been thought to be less well developed than quantitative skills; ability tests that are largely verbal in content are often indicted as being unfair for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The data here do not support either of these assumptions.

2. Among the achievement tests of STEP, the science test seems to offer the greatest difficulty for these students. In four of the 11 centers it is the science test, among the six STEP tests, that places the smallest percentage in the top quarter. Many of the schools serving these students have only recently acquired adequate science laboratories and equipment; if there is an area of deficiency in the skills possessed by the elementary teachers who have taught these children, it is most often in science.

3. One area of the communicative arts (reading or writing) is always the best in terms of these students' placement in the top quarter of the tests. The writing test of the STEP places emphasis on mechanics, a skill that has apparently been learned relatively well by these groups.

4. Even among these *selected* Project students the proportion placing in the top quarter (on all tests) is relatively small. Only at the Nelson County, Mobile, Lee County, and Breathitt County centers does the percentage consistently go above the 25 percent that would be expected of a typical *unselected* group of students.

5. There are wide differences among the centers with respect to the educational attainments of their top students. Fifty-six percent place in the top quarter on science at Nelson County, while only five percent do so in Canton; sixty-three percent of the Lee County students are in the top quarter in writing, while in neighboring Breathitt County there are only 25 percent.

6. Differences do not seem to be related to the racial characteristics of the students. The percentage in the top quarter from Mobile, a Negro center, is generally as high as the percentage in the top quarter in Breathitt County and Lee County, white centers in Eastern Kentucky.

23

Guidance Services

While most of the literature on the education of socially disadvantaged children is less than a decade old, certain tenets already are well established. Recognition of the child's need for an appropriate self image, for success areas, for motivation, for an early introduction to vocational guidance and for individual attention have all played a part in defining the unique role of the counselor in Project Opportunity.

College personnel and Project school administrators assumed responsibility for interviewing and employing counselors early in the Project. Each counselor was given an original job description which called for:

- ☐ Assisting in the educational planning of each child
- ☐ Conducting individual conferences with the child for the purpose of helping him understand and develop his potential
- ☐ Implementing special programs to reach the parents of Project students
- ☐ Making home visits
- ☐ Cooperating with teachers in developing the instructional programs
- ☐ Assisting local staff members in needed sociometric techniques
- ☐ Administering tests and interpreting the results to youngsters, parents, teachers, and college representatives
- ☐ Arranging for the child and his family to take advantage of cultural activities in the community and at the cooperating agencies
- ☐ Coordinating special work to be done by the college faculties and students
- ☐ Acting as liaison between the school and Project Opportunity

While certain guidance tasks in school systems are similar, it was agreed that the P. O. counselor's role with children from socially deprived homes should additionally be one of positive intervention, and that the guidance function should emphasize financial planning for college, academic readiness for higher education, and curricular modification.

An orientation to this type of guidance service was provided in June 1965 at an institute held at Berea College. Here counselors studied available materials on the education of disadvantaged children, much of it donated by the College Entrance Examination Board. Representatives from the New York Demonstration Guidance Project, the Banneker District of St. Louis Project, and the Information Retrieval Center on the Disadvantaged at Yeshiva University were key speakers. The central P. O. staff planned and directed the institute.

In addition to hiring of counselors, initial organizational funds were spent for establishing and equipping a guidance office for each center. In centers where there had been no previous guidance program, this involved major efforts. Administrators worked with the personnel of sponsoring colleges to provide these "housing facilities," some of which were temporary in nature.

In centers where there was no counselor aid, administrators, school faculty, and college personnel were responsible for testing and initial screening. In one center, the State Department of Education assisted. By the end of the 1964-65 school year, all centers had set up individual folders

on students who had been temporarily identified. Each folder contained a comprehensive data record, an autobiography, a teacher rating scale, and a counselor's summary of interviews with the student and/or his parents.

With students identified and guidance facilities functioning, counselors began a series of interviews with students. They also began to plan summer programs, make home visitations, organize parent groups, and set up Project school faculty guidance programs appropriate to the compensatory needs of their students.

At Virginia's Nelson County center, for instance, group guidance sessions included discussions of educational and vocational opportunities, individual abilities, interests, and motivation. Seventh graders at Rogers High School, in Canton, Mississippi, have been given practice in test taking. Group guidance classes at Durham's Merrick-Moore School have dealt with such subjects as testing, study habits and procedures, personal hygiene, and the social graces. Students at Kentucky's Lee County and Breathitt County High Schools have participated in a project called "Higher Education in Kentucky," a study of the state's educational facilities. At Auburn's Drake High School, group sessions have been held on how to study and prepare for exams. Such group sessions are an outgrowth of a continuing, intensive program of individual guidance. Counselors meet regularly with each student to discuss grades, interests, school problems, home difficulties, and individual needs.

Project counselors also devote much time and effort to individual college and career planning. Under the counselors' guidance, Project students have studied college catalogues, made tentative college choices, are becoming familiar with admissions procedures and scholarship opportunities, and are already thinking in terms of life vocations.

To encourage motivation, each center is equipped with educational-vocational materials. Students also regularly tour nearby college campuses, attend collegiate cultural and sports events, and enjoy a healthy interchange with students and teachers at the Project's sponsoring colleges. Motivation is further sparked by special enrichment projects ranging from a reading tournament at Priestly Junior High School to writing and art appreciation classes at Durham's Merrick-Moore School; from private music lessons on an experimental basis at Irwin Junior High School to the showing of weekly cultural films at Drake High School in Auburn, Alabama.

The influence of the counselors has been felt throughout the school community. At Rogers High School, for example, the Project counselor has conducted an in-service workshop on testing and the grading system and has provided seventh grade teachers with audio-visual materials, paperback books, and other teaching materials. Counselors also hold frequent meetings with the personnel administrators of feeder schools and sponsoring colleges. Their work with parents extends from private conferences to frequent group meetings and adult education programs. And they continue to marshall community support by making frequent talks to civic groups, writing newspaper articles, appearing on radio programs, and publishing newsletters for students, parents, and teachers.

Contributions of Sponsoring Colleges

The involvement of the 16 sponsoring colleges has been an essential part of Project Opportunity since its inception. It was recognized from the beginning that colleges and universities could make an invaluable contribution to such goals as cultural enrichment, academic skills, and personality development. A former assistant to a director of admissions put it this way:

"The university comprises a unique combination of resources which are indispensable to the Project's success: technical expertise, administrative skill, enthusiastic student participation, and marvelous personnel and events for expanding cultural horizons . . . The university is itself a living symbol of the higher education to which the Project students aspire."

Contributions to the program by Tulane personnel and students have been outstanding. As the sponsoring college for New Orleans' Priestly Junior High School, Tulane has organized a program of student involvement which includes special interest group meetings, tutoring sessions, and attendance at special events. Tulane students tutor Project Opportunity students in English, science, mathematics, and social studies in special sessions held once a week after class. These tutorials go beyond homework assignments and, with each tutor working with only two or three students, puts particular emphasis on oral and written communication.

In addition to tutoring, Tulane students sponsor nine special interest groups, limited to six students each. These are organized as lectures, discussions, seminars, or field trips. The *art group* encourages the students' artistic ability and gives them an opportunity to study the works of professional artists. In *current events*, students study the significance of local, national, and international news events. The *drama group* reads plays and attends actual performances. In *forensics*, students learn the basic skills of debate. Students are introduced to novels, poems, short stories, and essays in the *literature group*. Sessions of the *music group* are spent listening to recordings, studying the various periods of classical and secular music, and attending concerts. The *Negro history interest group* studies the heritage of the American Negro and the ancient and modern cultures of Africa. The *newspaper interest group*, a supplement to the school newspaper, helps students develop writing skills, and the *science group* extends the scientific education of interested students beyond the bounds of the ordinary classroom. Through imaginative planning, Tulane students have opened up new horizons for the young people of Project Opportunity.

In order to acquaint Project students with the life and opportunities of a college student, the Tulane students plan for them a full schedule of special events that includes concerts, operas, tours of the city, plays, basketball and baseball games, picnics, and game days. These programs have proved quite successful in complementing the enrichment aspects of the Project.

Spring Hill College's tutorial program, begun for Project students at Most Pure Heart of Mary School, now extends to students at the feeder schools, and the tutorial programs organized by Davidson students include some 30 to 40 Project students that meet each Saturday morning.

Often these college student programs take the form of Saturday morning seminars. Centre College students led Lee County Project youngsters in Saturday discussions on literature, mathematics, and political science, and the University of Virginia conducted regular seminars on the campus for the Project students of Nelson County.

The college consultants have played a key role in the success of Project Opportunity. Auburn University and Tuskegee Institute, working with the local school system, have provided consultant aid for the development of in-service training programs in mathematics, science, language arts, and social studies at Drake High School. An Auburn professor, D. Paul Melius, has worked with the Drake faculty in science curriculum, and Tuskegee faculty members have offered special assistance in parent education classes. The faculty of Spring Hill College has conducted lecture forums for Project parents, and under the direction of personnel from Berea College and Centre College, four teachers in the Kentucky center have prepared demonstration teaching units employing the multi-sensory technique in algebra, English, and social studies. Consultants from Tougaloo College have worked with teachers at Rogers High School to develop both new curricula and new approaches for the summer program. In addition, they have developed in-service training programs in English, science, math, and social studies and have developed a communications skills laboratory to improve speech patterns.

Many of the colleges conduct and cooperatively sponsor workshops and conferences of special interest to Project personnel. One such conference was held at Tulane University in October 1967, for student and faculty representatives from the 16 sponsoring colleges and universities. Its purpose was to discuss more effective ways of utilizing college students to help the various Project Opportunity centers. Approximately 65 conference participants heard John Munro of Miles College and Joel Fleishman of Yale University speak on the importance of compensatory education for large numbers of disadvantaged students. Another speaker, Robert Allen of the Nova Schools, analyzed trends in academic games and stressed the importance of keeping them simple, inexpensive, and pertinent to the school's educational goals.

Other college-sponsored meetings have included Spring Hill College's workshop on the education of the disadvantaged and Berea College's conference for liaison personnel of sponsoring colleges, Project Opportunity administrators and representatives from the Kentucky State Department of Education. Some programs are tailored especially for Project students, such as the one offered by Duke University's reading clinic.

By helping with in-service training, curricula development, cultural enrichment and tutorial programs, the sponsoring colleges have not only enhanced the knowledge of the teachers and the academic levels of Project students; they also have given disadvantaged youngsters a concept of college as an attainable and highly attractive goal, rather than a remote and impossible dream.

1967
Summer Programs

30

Summer programs at the 11 centers have been an integral part of the Project since its inception. Those responsible for the programs have begun to test innovative and creative approaches, a number of which have combined teacher training with subject matter enrichment for students. Teachers thus are provided with opportunities and necessary materials to demonstrate, and then to evaluate new methods of approach.

Although they vary somewhat from center to center, the general formats of the summer programs lend themselves to experimentation by the teachers more so than in formal classroom sessions where the tendency is to limit instruction to specific textbook material and courses of study.

Summer programs for 1967 saw much cooperative involvement of school and college personnel in planning and executing programs affecting Project students. Students, teachers, and participating college personnel all benefit from this heightened degree of cooperation. The students report an increased desire to achieve the work standards necessary for admission to college, their teachers acquire more confidence in their abilities to apply more effective instructional techniques, and college personnel gain added appreciation for the talents of secondary school teachers. The summer programs at North Carolina State, Centre College, and at the Nelson County, Virginia, center, are described here in order to show the kind of cooperation that has developed between school and college personnel in planning and carrying out programs for Project Opportunity students.

Math Institute at North Carolina

The North Carolina State University at Raleigh summer program consisted of a three-week mathematics institute on campus for rising 10th grade Project students. George Morelock, Division of Student Affairs, served as institute coordinator. Students were transported by bus to the campus, lived in University dormitories during the week, and returned home on weekends. While on campus, they were granted full college student privileges including activity cards, student union cards, meal tickets, and library cards. They also had free access to the gymnasium and all athletic facilities.

Classes were held daily from 9 a.m. to noon. Instructors were Dr. H. E. Speece, head of the Department of Mathematics and Science Education, and Mr. Gene Mercer, a graduate student in the same department. Two mathematics teachers from Merrick-Moore High School and Highland Junior High School served as in-service assistants. To provide a learning situation for the two Project teachers, a one-hour staff conference was held each day for class planning, discussion, and evaluation.

Goals of the institute were to stimulate a liking for mathematics not only as an academic discipline, but as fun; to develop a deeper understanding of mathematical concepts; to provide a wholesome recreational and social program; and to give students a foretaste of college life.

Teaching aids were utilized, and included academic games, self-teaching machines, pi finders, and Artin braids. Small groups were assigned projects such as a trip to the football field to calculate the height of a light-pole. Each group reported the results of its project to the rest of the class over closed-circuit television.

Typical reactions to the institute indicated its worth. One student wrote: *I like best being on television. It made me work harder because I wanted to be as accurate as possible when it was my turn to report.*

An in-service teacher observed: *The most outstanding thing was the change in student attitude toward the study of mathematics.*

The counselor reported: *They [the students] appeared to be more than eager to get to class in the mornings. They were punctual in following time schedules for tours and recreational events. Many returned voluntarily to the mathematics laboratory in the afternoon for independent study or for the completion of an assignment.*

Off campus, the students visited the Art, Science and History Museum; attended a session of the state legislature; and visited a computer center. However, campus tours seemed to evoke the most interest, many lasting three hours as a result of student interest. Students visited the University's nuclear reactor and the schools of design, engineering, agriculture, forestry, and textiles.

Kentucky Colleges Pooled Their Efforts

The two Project centers in Kentucky and the three sponsoring colleges pooled their efforts in a seven-week program on the campus of Centre College. The teaching faculty for the program included Centre College students, instructors from Centre and Transylvania College, and several faculty members from Princeton High School, Princeton, New Jersey. Teachers participating in the program from Breathitt and Lee counties did not take specific courses, but rather involved themselves in the development of courses and techniques that would be useful in their own schools.

Some 100 Project student participants from the two centers chose course offerings in biology, mathematics, literature, and social studies. During their three-week stay, they experienced college campus life for the first time. For recreation, the students visited Mammoth Cave and attended a performance of the *Stephen Foster Story* in Bardstown. With Dr. Barbara Varenhorst, counseling psychologist from Palo Alto, California, serving as consultant, the students also learned the value of sound educational and vocational planning while playing the *Life Career Game*. During the evaluation phase of the program, plans were laid for college personnel to continue a follow-up program in both schools.

Summer of Discovery in Virginia

Approximately 80 students spent six weeks in study and recreation in the Nelson County, Virginia, summer program called "Summer of Discovery." Project students participated in the planning of the program. The staff included three instructors from the previous summer, two teachers from Nelson County, and several senior students from nearby colleges.

Writing, oral interpretation, and debating formed the nucleus of study in the creative expression classes. One class read and discussed William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* and then held a mock trial to determine the murderer of one of the characters.

The fine arts sessions centered on ceramics, with the class studying films depicting the various art media. A local artist visited the class and spoke to the students of her own career.

In the drama class, students considered the techniques of the one-act play. Several students participated in the writing of dramatic skits.

The sophomore music group formed a Tiajuana band and a choral

group. The freshmen studied the basics of music and organized a bottle-and-jug band. Class work was a combination of theory and application.

In one project, working with the slide rule, the problem solving class scaled down the solar system to the size of a football field.

During the first five weeks of the natural resources class, students surveyed astronomy, geology, chemistry, and biology. Visiting instructors from Mary Baldwin College and Virginia Polytechnic Institute led the discussions and accompanied the students on field trips. The program was concluded with a week's stay on the VPI campus, where each student had a choice of studying and working on two projects.

Recreation included badminton, basketball, track, swimming, and modern dance. A special program of private instruction in swimming was held after the close of the summer program for those students who desired it. An overnight camping trip was the final event of the recreation program.

School-Year Program

Although the summer programs have had a powerful impact on participants—both students and instructional personnel—many new experiences have been encountered also by participants during the regular school year. It should be emphasized that spillover from summer activities into the school year has had a beneficial effect on the regular curriculum at all centers.

Programs aimed at improving communication skills are a part of regular classwork in all centers. These cover a wide range—remedial reading, creative writing, role playing, creative drama, speech improvement through patterned learning, vocabulary improvement, radio and television participation, reading for fun as a substitute for book reports, and use of high interest, easy reading books.

Much interest has developed where students have written and produced original dramas. One eighth-grade English class, with the aid of a college drama teacher, wrote and filmed its own movie. The students played all parts.

In addition to several revised science courses, one center is experimenting with a chemistry-physics course for ninth graders, and several others have introduced a course in earth science in lieu of the traditional general science. Nearly all centers now use the Biological Sciences Curriculum Study program.

Many students are doing independent study in science in addition to their regular class work. Schools that did not sponsor or participate in science fairs now do so as a regular part of their science work.

All centers now teach at least some classes utilizing the "new" mathematics. In schools where this was a new approach, teachers are continuing their study by means of in-service classes and summer institutes. Three centers, with aid of the sponsoring colleges, are providing classes in computer training, and academic games of mathematics are used extensively.

In social studies, units of Negro contributions to history, literature, art and music are used widely. The use of simulations is common. One center has built a full semester course in eighth-grade social studies using the simulations technique; another center constructed a social studies unit around the history of its own region.

At the beginning of the Project, foreign language offerings were modest at most centers. Although still lagging behind other phases of their curricular programs, each center now teaches at least two years of a language, and several are adding the third year in 1968-69 if a class develops from the Project students. Some centers have started a foreign language at the junior-high level, but no really strong attempts to improve this area have developed except in two centers. Lee County secured a visiting teacher from Venezuela to initiate a course in Spanish in the school there. This teacher was obtained through a program sponsored by the Cordell Hull Program. Breathitt County employed the services of a teacher from France for one semester to work with the teachers in its French department in improving the curriculum and the teaching methods. Part of the expense of this program was borne by Amity Institute, the rest by Project Opportunity.

Few of the Project Opportunity

centers had specific programs in art, music, and speech at the beginning of the program. With the advent of the Elementary and Secondary School Education Act this has been remedied to some extent. Also, this has been an area where the Project has been most successful in obtaining voluntary aid from both the colleges and the community. At the Auburn center, for example, a demonstration program in art consists of art history and actual work in painting; the faculty is drawn from Auburn University and Tuskegee Institute. The schools still rely heavily on these sources for fine arts instruction. In addition, the work by Berea College in folk music and folk dancing has been outstanding.

The central staff has conducted numerous conferences and workshops for the administrators of the Project centers. In these they have had the opportunity to become acquainted with innovative techniques and to learn of some of the most recent research concerning learning theory.

Project funds have provided opportunity for administrators to visit innovative projects and to observe programs in action.

The Road Ahead

37

Within Project Opportunity, the past four years have been a time of trial and error; of working out the mechanics of operation. It has been a learning situation for those who administer as well as for the students involved. As operational procedures become more routine and the curiosity concerning the project melts into routine acceptance of it as a part of the school and the community, the outlook for the future becomes more distinct.

Small successes encourage both teachers and administrators to take more calculated risks with new programs and new methods of teaching. There is an increasing awareness that "something is happening in education" and an increasing desire to be a part of it.

Project Opportunity lays no claim to having discovered a miracle solution to all the problems of education of the disadvantaged. Its personnel does not believe that any one innovation, be it team teaching, simulation, or computer-assisted instruction, is a cure-all. It is felt that from multiplicity of research and demonstration programs come many ideas of value and Project Opportunity hopes to be a contributor to the user of these ideas.

Project Opportunity is a limited program serving a limited group. It is directed toward the more capable student in the belief that from this group leaders are most likely to emerge—leaders the deprived community sorely needs. If justification is needed for concentrating efforts on one group, it can be found in the needs of the community.

In areas where the greater proportion of students come from middle class homes, preparation for college is a way of life and the schools have developed strong college preparatory programs to serve these students. In low socio-economic areas the opposite is true. To most of these students and their parents, college is an unreachable star. Faced with the harsh necessity of making a living, students are too often oriented to entering the labor market as soon as possible, even at the expense of high school graduation. Many are oriented only to the present and see only vocational training as an educational goal. With few models of professionally trained persons in their communities, it is difficult for parents and students to see value in the study of a foreign language, algebra, or economics.

The first community-wide impact of a program such as Project Opportunity could come as early as 1972 when, at Christmas vacation, some 100 former Project students then enrolled in college return to their homes and communities. Then, for the first time, communities will have an opportunity to see an appreciable number of their high school graduates demonstrate that higher education is not just a luxury of the middle class, but a goal that their young people also can reach.

Attitudes do not change easily; curricular change comes slowly. It is difficult to foresee and plan when one is surrounded by the daily pressures to acquire the food, clothing, and shelter necessary for existence. The desire to see results "now" is a characteristic of the affected residents of deprived areas and also characteristic of the majority of those working in compensatory programs to eradicate in a year or two the problems that have accumulated over a century. But, the "now" for Project Opportunity is a hike, not a sprint. Its aim is to estab-

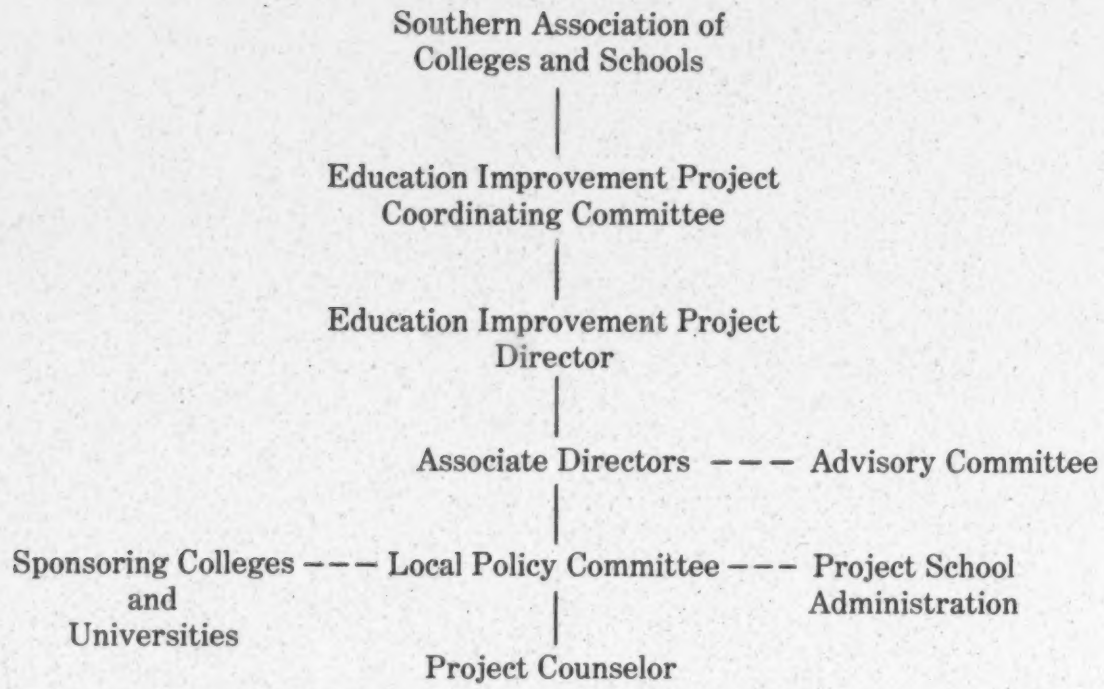
lish deep roots and a steady growth; not shallow roots and an oversized plant which can easily be toppled.

Project Opportunity strongly believes that academic talent is present in all socio-economic areas, in all races; it believes that it is possible to identify and train this talent; it believes that human potential is our greatest natural resource and that conservation of this resource is worthy of major efforts.

History has recorded rapid advancement in eras when an intangible condition known as the "right climate" was present. Today, "the climate is right" in education.

Appendix

Organizational Structure



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(as of July 1, 1968)

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Associate Directors, Project Opportunity
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Hugh R. Fordyce

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Mildred Gilkey, Atlanta
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Gertrude Jones, Canton
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Nezzie Carter, Durham
Christopher Sanford, Charlotte
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C. Edward Williams, Nashville

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- Rolan Henry
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